

Frisky Fitness

Healthy exercise can be as simple as a romp around the house. Arnold Schwarzenegger, a fitness expert actor and active father of two, tells you how to get your family up and running.

“For kids, fitness seems as though it ought to be a natural part of growing up, as natural as riding a bike or building a tree house. But in America today, children under five years old are ogging an average of 25 hours a week of TV viewing, and childhood obesity is on the rise. It is no longer possible to assume that kids are moving and shaking on their own.

So what can you as a parent do to help your child become excited about fitness? The best way is to make exercise and physical activity a normal and indispensable part of your family life from the time your child is born. It's as easy as spending a little time playing and exercising with your child every day.

In addition to remembering that fitness should always be fun, it is important to take it one step at a time. Kids can't and won't master any new physical skills until they are developmentally ready. Celebrate each new accomplishment as it comes, rather than rushing your child toward a particular goal, such as walking, or playing baseball.

You can't expect to pull out a bat and a ball on your daughter's fifth birthday and assume that she'll be the Babe Ruth of the sandlot. It all starts much earlier with some basic skills that later combine into the art of baseball. Some of the building blocks for batting, for instance, would include learning to hit a large, stationary ball on the ground, then hitting a large ball rolled on the ground, then a large ball on a stand, then a gently pitched large ball, then a gently pitched smaller ball, and so on.

To help your child along the path to fitness, there's no need to worry about creating an expensive, pumped-up gym; all you'll need are an exercise mat (thick carpet), some balls, pillows, and a few fun exercises that the two of you can do together.”

